



**East of England**

**All Party Parliamentary Group**

**Co-Chairs:** Jess Asato MP and Andrew Pakes MP

**Vice-Chairs:** Blake Stephenson MP & Marie Goldman MP

*Sent by email on 11<sup>th</sup> November*

Dear Jim McMahon MP

#### **REQUEST FOR PRIVATE MEETING**

##### ***Investing in the East of England: Delivering Strong and financially Sustainable Councils***

We are writing to request you meet with ourselves and the Chair of the East of England Local Government Association following the East of England APPG meeting last week. This meeting focused on how Government, Parliamentarians, and partners across the region can work together to ensure local government remains strong and financially sustainable. This is mission critical because, as you know, councils will need to play a central role in delivering the Government's ambitions including kickstarting the economy, breaking down the barriers to opportunity and building an NHS fit for the future.

**As the Minister at MHCLG with responsibility for local government finance we would very much welcome a private and early opportunity to discuss these important issues with you.**

The APPG meeting was attended by many of the East of England's MPs – new and previous – most of whom have a local government background as councillors, and in many cases were leaders of councils. They, alongside the East of England LGA, are acutely aware of the financial pressures on local government, including the demands of housing and homelessness, adult social care, children's services, SEND and home to school transport.

The attached briefing paper was presented at the meeting where attendees welcomed the Budget's increased funding for local authorities (including for social care and SEND) and its declared intention of simplifying the wider local funding landscape by reducing the number of grants and moving towards multi-year settlements for local government.

Reform of the funding formula, also committed to in the Budget, is long overdue and was also welcomed. However, the East of England LGA seeks full and meaningful engagement in this process to ensure that it reflects the population growth of our region (the highest in the country at the last census) and the specific issues we face including hidden pockets of deprivation, rurality and an ageing population.

Attendees look forward to the English Devolution White Paper. Devolution of powers and funding to local leaders is key to delivering efficient, well-targeted support for local communities. However, the Budget saw no new deals announced for our region. The East of England stands ready to work with the Government to take advantage of future devolution.

A number of other comments were made including that it was an oversight to miss the opportunity to address the rapidly rising costs of temporary accommodation for homeless households, which are placing significant and increasing pressure on council budgets. Similarly, the increases in SEND and adult social care funding, although welcome, are not sufficient to meet rising need.

It was pointed out that many local authorities have been “cut to the bone” with some now struggling to meet statutory duties. Cllr Butland remarked that he had never known local government to be so challenging.

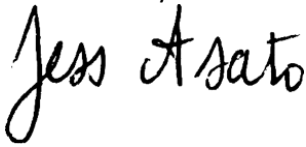
In conclusion, to ensure that our local authorities can continue to deliver for residents across the region, there are two other important things that are required from Government.

The first is stability. The sector has had to navigate its way through seven one-year funding settlements, which have given local authorities little in the way of security or predictability. This has limited the ability of local authorities to manage their finances, leading to a reduced appetite for risk, an inability to plan, and the fear of suboptimal spending decisions. The Government has announced that it will move to a three-year spending cycle going forward, and we ask that this not be diluted in any way.


Second, local authorities should be trusted with greater powers around income raising. Real terms core funding for local authorities per capita is 18% lower than in 2010/11. While more funding through the funding formula is desperately needed, local authorities also need the freedom to raise more of their own income to tackle rising costs.

We very much hope that you will agree to meet to discuss these important issues with us. Please may we ask your officials to liaise with Steve Barwick of the East of England APPG Secretariat – who has sent this email on our behalf – regarding when may be most convenient for us to do that.

Yours sincerely



**Jess Asato MP**  
Co-chair, East of England APPG  
and Labour MP for Lowestoft



**Andrew Pakes MP**  
Co-chair, East of England APPG  
and Labour MP for Peterborough



**Blake Stephenson MP**  
Vice-chair, East of England APPG  
and Conservative MP for Mid Bedfordshire



**Marie Goldman**  
Vice-chair, East of England APPG  
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*Sent by Steve Barwick, Director, East of England APPG Secretariat*

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